



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Statement in Response to the ODIHR Director's Report on the HDIM**

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
October 28, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you also Ambassador Strohal, for your overview of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. The United States thanks ODIHR for organizing a successful and productive meeting.

We are pleased to have this opportunity here this morning in the Permanent Council to discuss follow-up to the HDIM. What is important is not only what we say at the HDIM, but what we do afterwards and this discussion here, in this decision-making body, we see as a direct link to OSCE action. Of course, the main responsibility for implementation of our OSCE commitments lies with our own governments, and we hope that follow-up action will also be taken in our capitals, so I would like to take a few minutes, Mr. Chairman, more than we normally would, because as I recollect the modalities say that there should be a separate PC devoted to the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting but we agreed that we would include it in this meeting here, as we did last year, in the spirit of cooperation, because this is a very busy time of the year.

The United States demonstrated its commitment to, and belief in, the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting through first of all, its very strong delegation. We had three United States ambassadors there, one Assistant Secretary, two Deputy Assistant Secretaries and four very prominent public members coming from very prominent NGOs and I want to thank those States who actively participated and who did so at senior and expert levels. As I have often said, the success of this annual event depends on the involvement of the officials who are in a position to follow-up on the discussions that take place in Warsaw and we call upon those States who did not send high-level delegations to do so next year because it makes a measurable difference on the importance and the impact of that very, very important event. In particular we note here with great sadness that for the fifth year in a row, Turkmenistan did not have a delegation at all.

We believe there are many ways that we can strengthen the HDIM. The United States supports the suggestion that we consider adjusting how we allocate our time next year and we are very open to discussing this with other delegations on how we can ensure that our time is best used.

The HDIM is an open forum to discuss both our strengths and our shortcomings, which we all have. In that spirit, we held a side event with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Detainee Affairs, Mr. Matthew Waxman, to explain the steps that the United States has taken to investigate and hold accountable those responsible for the abuse of detainees in Iraq and to ensure that similar issues do not re-emerge. Those acts were wrong and inconsistent with U.S.

policies and values. I would like to take this opportunity to update the council with the news that one of the soldiers involved in the abuse was sentenced last week to eight years in prison, a forfeiture in pay, and a dishonorable discharge, together with a reduction in rank.

Mr. Chairman, one of the greatest strengths of the HDIM is the unique opportunity it provides for dialogue not only with officials from other governments, but also with other international organizations, human rights activists, and NGOs. The U.S. welcomes the statement made by over 100 NGOs at the closing session of the HDIM, which reminded participants that human rights and democratic values are at the core of the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security.

I would note also that there was a record attendance by NGOs at this meeting, again demonstrating very clearly the value that they place on this forum.

Discussions at the HDIM brought out several areas where we believe there should be a particular focus in human dimension events for the year 2005. These include: migration and integration; protection of religious freedom in the fight against terrorism; the challenges of new election technologies, such as electronic voting; and the role of defense lawyers.

In addition, we very much welcome again the Spanish offer to host a follow-up event on tolerance next year in Cordoba, and believe that combating anti-Semitism, and racism, and xenophobia, and discrimination should remain fully on the agenda next year.

During the sessions devoted to tolerance and non-discrimination, many participants called for the appointment of CiO Personal Representatives to follow up on the Berlin and Brussels Conferences and to promote implementation of the PC decisions related to those conferences. We urge the Chairman-in-Office to move quickly to appoint these representatives – one on Anti-Semitism to follow up on the Berlin conference, and one on Racism, Xenophobia, and Discrimination to follow up on the Brussels Conference. These appointments must not wait until the Ministerial. The fact that twenty States have yet to submit, twenty States, any data on hate crimes to ODIHR indicates a pressing need for representatives of high stature to begin traveling immediately to raise political will on behalf of the OSCE to tackle these important issues that we read about and that appear on the front pages of all of our presses every day.

The United States looks forward to a Tolerance Decision at the Sofia Ministerial Council that will endorse the Berlin and Brussels Declarations, as well as a Decision on promoting tolerance and media freedom on the Internet.

We look forward to the adoption of the 2004 Gender Action Plan, and its endorsement by the Ministerial.

We also would like the Ministerial to strengthen our commitment to combat trafficking in persons. One issue that received close attention in Warsaw was the need to ensure that our own peacekeepers and other international personnel do not contribute to the problem. We therefore propose that the Sofia Ministerial endorse the NATO Anti-Trafficking Policy that addresses this issue. We will circulate a written proposal on this in the coming days.

We are open to looking at the need to fill gaps in OSCE election-related commitments. We continue to believe that the Copenhagen Document is a strong foundation for free, fair and democratic elections and therefore we support "Copenhagen-Plus," but not "Copenhagen Two."

Finally, I would like to turn a couple of specific issues that received significant attention in Warsaw.

Many participants expressed concern about developments in Belarus, particularly concerning the election and referendum to eliminate term limits on the presidency which took place just two days after the HDIM. Many of those concerns proved to be justified, and the OSCE International Election Observation Mission concluded that the elections "fell significantly short of OSCE commitments" and that "the Belarusian authorities failed to ensure the fundamental conditions necessary for the will of the people to serve as a basis for authority of government." We remain very concerned about negative developments in Belarus, including continuing repression of civil society. Indeed, many NGOs - not only from Belarus - reported that their activities, and even their very existence are being hampered by government oppression.

The United States and the EU once again raised concerns about the situation in Turkmenistan. While there has been some limited progress this year, particularly concerning the lifting of exit visas and the registration of some religious groups, repression continues. The law on civil society, for example, limits the ability of traditional NGOs to register and to actively participate in Turkmenistan. The ICRC still has no access to prisoners. There is no freedom of media. We continue to believe that the recommendations made last year by Moscow Mechanism Rapporteur Decaux remain valid, and we urge the Government of Turkmenistan to implement them.

Mr. Chairman, I very much welcome this PC discussion on follow-up to the HDIM. The ultimate effectiveness of the HDIM lies in the degree to which we do this follow-up. It is, therefore, up to all of us to take action and we urge you to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman